

## **Paine College Announces Alum and Attorney Michael L. Thurmond as 2026 Commencement Speaker**

AUGUSTA, GA — Paine College proudly announces that distinguished alumnus, attorney, and public servant Michael L. Thurmond will serve as the Commencement Speaker for the College's 2026 Commencement Ceremony, to be held on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at the HEAL Complex on campus.

A respected leader known for his commitment to public service, economic development, and community empowerment, Thurmond currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, Georgia. His career spans decades of impactful leadership, including roles as Georgia's Labor Commissioner, Director of the Division of Family and Children Services, and a member of the Georgia General Assembly.

As a proud graduate of Paine College, Thurmond embodies the institution's legacy of producing leaders who are dedicated to service and excellence. His selection as commencement speaker underscores the College's commitment to inspiring graduates through voices that reflect both achievement and purpose.

"We are honored to welcome one of our own back to Paine College for this momentous occasion," said Dr. Lester A. McCorn, President of Paine College. "Michael L. Thurmond represents the very best of what a Paine education produces—principled leadership, unwavering resilience, and a deep commitment to uplifting communities. His life's work is a powerful testament to the impact of service, and we are confident his words will inspire our graduates to lead with courage, integrity, and purpose."

The 2026 Commencement Ceremony will begin at 9:00 a.m., celebrating the achievements of the graduating class as they prepare to embark on the next chapter of their journeys.

Thurmond is also an accomplished author and thought leader, widely recognized for his scholarship on race, history, and public policy. His work and leadership continue to influence conversations on equity, opportunity, and justice across the state and nation.

Paine College's Commencement Weekend, scheduled for May 7–9, 2026, will include a series of events honoring graduates and welcoming alumni back to campus for Reunion Weekend 2026.

For more information about Commencement and Reunion Weekend, visit [www.paine.edu](http://www.paine.edu)